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February 5, 2010

Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin  
Washington Office  
2446 Rayburn Building  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Baldwin:

United Way of Dane County is working with some of Madison's most influential leaders in real estate development, finance, government, business and the nonprofit sector to find a way to reverse the tide of homelessness in our community.

Two critical pieces of this work are housing stabilization (i.e. case management and linkages to financial education, benefits, treatment and employment) and the *Housing First* program model. *Housing First* is a program whereby individuals and families are moved out of homelessness or shelter and into long-term housing as quickly as possible; once in housing, they are provided with supportive services to assure that they are stabilized and avoid repeated homelessness. United Way and our community partners have piloted the program to end homelessness for families in Dane County with excellent results.

We are asking your support to extend our efforts to reduce homelessness among individuals, especially those with chronic mental illness and substance abuse issues, using housing stabilization and *Housing First* models. The Dane County 2008 Annual Report on Homelessness states that 46% of all homeless persons served that year were single men and women; a total of 1,804 single adults were served in shelter. Just over 51% of these homeless singles self-reported mental health issues and 27% self-reported alcohol and other drug abuse issues. Many are veterans dealing with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other issues.

United Way of Dane is requesting \$300,000 in Economic Development Initiative funding to partner with Porchlight to construct two buildings (one 14 unit and one 24 unit) that will be used to provide housing, programs and services for homeless persons, with concentrated support for individuals with persistent mental illness and substance abuse issues. The funding would only be used for construction and allowable construction related costs.

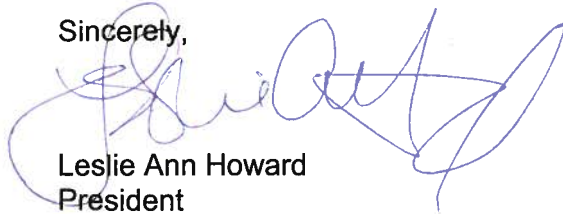
The return on investment for this funding would be substantial. In 2009, United Way of Dane County managed a cost analysis that indicated that \$3.4 million is spent annually on services for fewer than seventy people, with mental health and substance abuse issues, whose problems lead them to frequent contact with the Madison police department and homeless services providers.

The need for this housing has been identified by both public and private sector leaders in Dane County. The City of Madison's Consolidated Plan, and its Homelessness Strategic Plan, documents a significant gap between available shelter and supportive housing beds and the need. The Dane County Consolidated Plan and 3-5 Year Strategic Plan places a high priority on "the development of permanent and transitional housing, with on-site or accessible services to support various sub-populations." Similarly, United Way's cross sector Housing In Action Leadership Team analyzed local data and national research and came to the conclusion that the development of affordable housing and supportive services, particularly the *Housing First* model, must be a top priority for our community.

Your sponsorship of an appropriation for this project will go a long way toward reducing homelessness for individuals with mental health and substance abuse issues and reducing the system costs associated with caring for them.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Leslie Ann Howard", with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Leslie Ann Howard  
President